

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – January 2019

Stock Assessment

Savage River - Completed the Savage River Trophy Trout Fishing Area 2018 Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration draft report. The combined adult trout species densities met our management objective of 1,000 adult trout per mile during 2018. Adult brown trout comprised about 92 percent of the estimated adult density. Adult brook trout densities continue to be low, accounting for only five percent of the combined adult trout densities. Rainbow trout were found in low abundance (three percent of combined adult trout densities), and are emigrants from the North Branch Potomac River or from the Savage River Reservoir, where they are stocked as part of the put-and-take trout stocking program. The combined brook and brown trout 2018 year-class was 576 young of year per mile (45 percent brook trout and 55 percent brown trout), indicating a “moderate-strength” year-class.



Savage River brown trout, 2018.

Habitat and Water Quality

Environmental Review - Provided aquatic resource information for environmental review projects including:

- Two time of year in-stream construction waiver requests for failing culverts in the Braddock Run watershed in Allegany County. The failing culverts were causing the road to collapse and eliminating vehicular access to households. The conditions allowed for an emergency repair with the recommendations that the culvert pipes should not result in the blockage of passage for aquatic life. The culverts should be depressed at least one foot below stream invert, and a low flow channel should be provided through riprap structures. Finally, the proposed work must be conducted under the most rigorous conformity with state, federal and county guidelines and regulations for erosion and sediment control, backed by strict monitoring and enforcement.

- Two abandoned mine land reclamation projects in the Georges Creek watershed. One project involved sealing a mine opening and the other project involved repairing a landslide at a former mine site. Both projects appear to be proactive in preventing water quality degradation.
- Sang Run State Park, Youghiogheny River streambank stabilization project. Staff provided supportive comments for the project to reduce bank erosion at the confluence of the Youghiogheny River and the Sang Run tributary. Also suggested including an Americans with Disabilities Act fishing access point at the site as well as provide for riparian zone plantings along the Sang Run tributary.
- The US Army Corps of Engineers regarding a proposed whitewater release in the North Branch Potomac River downstream of Jennings Randolph Lake during late October. The Freshwater Fisheries Program could not support the proposal because leaf fall that serves as the base of the food chain will be flushed from the tailwater, resulting in a loss of biotic production. Aquatic invertebrates rely on this source of food throughout the fall, winter, and early spring months. So in order to have a productive system as possible, we would not want to see this food source washed out of the in-stream habitats during this critical time period.
- A Carroll County stormwater management facility retrofit. The current detention facility will be upgraded to a surface sand filter design. The sand filter design is more protective of thermal requirements for coldwater resources while also helping to meet total maximum daily load (TMDL) goals.
- Guidelines for fish relocation efforts during an extensive stream restoration project to protect existing aquatic resources during construction activities.
- A restoration design to stabilize a breached dam breast and establish a stable stream channel through a dewatered pond to reduce erosion and sedimentation in a watershed that supports a naturalized brown trout population.
- The Maryland Department of Environment and the Town of Thurmont regarding temperature monitoring in Big Hunting Creek to determine current thermal conditions prior to discharge permit renewal.
- The State Highway Administration and the department's Environmental Review Program regarding rehabilitation of a concrete outfall under Interstate 95 in Cecil County. Current conditions have resulted in extensive erosion on the steep slope downstream of the outfall. Solutions to address the erosion are being discussed.

Western Region Land Stewardship Committee - Staff provided supporting information for two potential land acquisitions within the Youghiogheny River Wild and Scenic Corridor.

- One parcel is a completely wooded 5.2 acre parcel bordering the east side of the river just downstream of Miller's Run. The parcel adjoins the state-owned Youghiogheny River Natural Environmental Area on both sides of the river. The property will provide additional public access for boating, fishing, hiking, birding, hunting, and wildlife viewing.
- Another 0.90 acre property near Swallow Falls also adjoins state-owned property. The Freshwater Fisheries Program fully supports this acquisition as it will provide for

increased recreational fishing opportunities as well as provide for long-term water quality and riparian habitat protection within the Youghiogheny River Wild and Scenic Corridor.

Land Reclamation Committee - Participated in site and reclamation plan reviews for the following:

- A 446 acre strip mine in the Georges Creek watershed. Current land use is undeveloped with some forest cover. Post-mine use was submitted to be undeveloped with grasses. The committee asked that Maryland Department of the Environment approach the landowner to consider conservation land use post-mining in order to regain lost forestlands.
- A 50 acre strip mine located in the Georges Creek watershed. Pre-mining land use is forest, while the applicant submitted a post-mine land use as undeveloped with grasses. The committee requested that Maryland Department of the Environment approach the landowner to consider post-land use to be forest.
- A 14 acre site along the Casselman River for treatment ponds for the Casselman Deep Mine.

Little Laurel Run Brook Trout Restoration Project - A hardened livestock crossing on Little Laurel Run will be constructed in 2019 to complete the brook trout stream restoration project. The crossing was funded through the Maryland Chapter Trout Unlimited from a donation by the Ludwig and Nancy Sternberger Charitable Foundation. The crossing will reduce sediment inputs into the stream as well as improve bank stability.



A hardened livestock crossing will be constructed at this site on Little Laurel Run.

Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience - Broadford Elementary School teachers, Deep Creek Lake State Park's Discovery Center Naturalists, and Western Region I Freshwater Fisheries Manager met to discuss a long-term environmental restoration project for the school's

fifth grade class Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience. We decided on focusing our efforts on nearby Broadford Lake, with the hope of improving water quality and riparian habitat for fish and wildlife. The students will start obtaining baseline water quality data as well as characterizing conditions of the riparian zone around the lake and its tributaries starting in September 2019. We plan on planting the riparian zones with native shrubs to improve shoreline conditions and water quality starting in the spring of 2020.

Stocking and Population Management

Rainbow Trout - Assisted the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division with stocking rainbow trout fingerlings in the North Branch Potomac River zero creel limit for all trout species fishing area. A total of 25,032 rainbow trout fingerlings (168 fish/lb) were stocked on Jan. 17 from the Bowden Hatchery. This high quality trout fishery is supported by put and grow trout management, and fingerling trout exhibit excellent growth and survival in the North Branch Potomac River.

Outreach

Responded to customer service requests regarding: wild trout fishing opportunities in Bear Creek; bonus trout stocking in the Youghiogheny River; volunteer trout stocking opportunities; ice conditions on Deep Creek Lake; Savage River trophy trout survey results; Potomac River muskie fishing opportunities and river conditions; identification of white catfish caught near Sparrows Point; tiger trout caught in Evitts Creek and fishing opportunities for tiger muskie.

Provided state zoologist with fish population data within the Town Creek watershed for a freshwater mussel reintroduction feasibility study.

Prepared an article for Maryland Hunting Quarterly's spring fishing outlook article regarding springtime brook trout fishing opportunities in Garrett County's public lands.

Provided annual presentation on the "State of the Gunpowder Falls Tailwater" to the Maryland Chapter of Trout Unlimited in Towson, MD.

Created a [Maryland Muskie Program webpage](#) to provide resource information, recent and ongoing management projects, fish handling recommendations and links to the muskie volunteer angler survey. The survey can be saved to a mobile phone home screen to provide one touch access to electronically report trip results. The survey is essential to obtaining population and catch data used to monitor the fishery.

Invasive Species

Submitted necessary paperwork to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in December to fund additional invasive species work conducted by the department.

Flathead Catfish - Staff discussed with watermen the obstacles to removing flathead catfish from lower Susquehanna River owing to regulations prohibiting commercial fishing in some areas.

Angler Access

Fishery Management Areas - Performed land maintenance and litter pick-up at the Evitts Creek Ponds and North Branch Potomac River fishery management areas.

Eastern Region attended a meeting with representatives from the department's Wildlife and Heritage Service and the United States Army Corp of Engineers to discuss reopening Stemmers Run Reservoir for fishing and hunting activities.

Razing of structures on the Jackson/Beaver Creek FMA in Washington County began in January and will be completed by late winter. A parking lot will be developed for anglers to access the Beaver Creek fly fishing only - catch and return management area.

Brook Trout Program

Compiled brook trout sampling data to be incorporated into the Freshwater Fisheries coldwater database.

Repaired the damaged temperature probe on the lower Savage River - the probe had become dislodged from its housing and washed downstream. This instrumentation provides constant real time water temperature data year round.

Assisted in grant writing and provided letters of support for two brook trout habitat restoration proposals for the Wolfden Run (Garrett County) and Sand Spring Run (Allegany County) watersheds in western Maryland.

Continued work for the East Coast Trout Management and Culture VI meeting being held in Frostburg June 10-12, 2019, with the first call for papers being distributed in early January. For more information visit easternbrooktrout.org.

Tidal Bass Program

Finalized date for the next Black Bass Advisory Subcommittee meeting (April 8 at 6:00 pm in Tawes State Office Building, Conf. Room C-1, Annapolis, MD). Tentative agenda items include membership, a bass stock assessment report, and updates on upcoming work. Also confirmed same date for a tournament director webinar that will be announced via letter to permitted directors in mid February.

Began work on Black Bass Annual Review that will be issued by March.

Worked with hatcheries to develop the bass stocking strategy for 2019.

Submitted contacts for the Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic Commission (MORE) to promote bass fishing and identify hindrances to further developing the fishery. Staff attended the MORE commission meeting in Charles County on January 29.

Met with executives from National Harbor to discuss the progress of the reef project and possible expansion of the work to other harbors of tidal freshwater Potomac River.

Developed notes for environmental review to comment on ongoing permitting of coal ash disposal to Potomac River from Dominion Energy's Possum Point power plant.